



**Issue 46 (2007)**  
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**Part 1: News Analysis**

After decades of Gazprom's virtual monopoly on Turkmen natural gas imports, President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov this week signaled his dramatically different approach of promoting market competition for his country's greatest natural resource. On November 14 he re-convened the industry's most high-profile event, the Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Conference, in the Turkmen capital after a six-year hiatus. According to the Turkmen government, business people representing some 150 companies from 21 countries flocked to the two-day event, as well as government officials, including the EU's Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs, Director of Natural Resources of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Kevin Bortz, and US Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman. Sponsors included many of the world's major oil and gas companies, led by BP. President Berdimukhamedov sent Deputy Prime Minister Tachberdy Tagiyev, who supervises the fuel and energy industry in the Cabinet of Ministers, to read his greetings to the gathering. The president noted Turkmenistan's growing integration into the world's fuel and energy system and said favorable conditions for investors had been created, backed by internationally-recognized legal protections.

A western oilman attending the conference interviewed by the *Financial Times* concluded that Turkmenistan is "playing crafty politics, using pipelines as bargaining chips to maximise interest in its resources." By invoking the prospect of alternative buyers, Turkmenistan has strengthened its hand in price negotiations. Russia has already agreed to a 40-percent hike for Turkmen gas for 2008. Regional analyst Martha Olcott suggested this week that the government's unwillingness to disclose the actual size of its reserves was in fact a conscious tactic to stimulate competitive bids.

Anticipating increased foreign investment, President Berdimukhamedov gave Turkmen officials 10 days beginning November 13 to produce a plan for eliminating the roughly fivefold gap between the official and black market foreign exchange rates, Reuters and *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan* reported. Currently the official rate of exchange is 5,200 manat per US dollar, but 23,600 on the black market.

President Berdimukhamedov pursued vigorous engagement with the UN this week, launched symbolically in September with his participation in the UN General Assembly session. The president received three senior UN officials: Vladimir Goryayev, Deputy Director of the Asia and the Pacific Division in the Department of Political Affairs of the UN, with whom he discussed the opening of the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy, timed to the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Turkmenistan's declared neutrality; and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan Tomas Karl Koenigs and Head of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan Talatbek Masadykov, who raised the need for the continued supply of energy to Afghanistan.

UNICEF, WHO, the U.S. Center for Disease Control, and USAID assisted this week with the launch of a national campaign to vaccinate 3 million Turkmen citizens from measles and rubella, including youths from 7-23 years old and women from 24-40. The program is a concrete achievement for the president, who had promised progress in the public health, education, and employment sectors. The president also announced a US \$4 billion investment in raising living standards, and decreed this week that starting January 1, 2008, state employees will receive a 10-percent wage increase. Teachers had already been granted a 40-percent increase, but the Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights (TIHR) reported that the president's reform plans are

not being implemented in practice. Teachers in Ashgabat got only a 15-percent addition to their paychecks, and in the provinces most teachers did not get any raises at all or were paid with delays.

## Part 2: News Digest

Summary: After a six-year hiatus, the Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Conference re-convened this week, attracting the industry's top oil company executives and energy officials from around the world. Turkmenistan positioned itself to promote market competition for its greatest natural resource by continuing to discuss new gas routes, with an aim to reduce dependence on Russia. Increased engagement with UN officials also reflected Turkmenistan's rising international profile. .

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## 1. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### a. President Receives UN Political Affairs Official Vladimir Goryaev

**Original title:** *President of Turkmenistan Receives UN High-Ranking Official. Excerpt by OSI Turkmenistan Project.*

**Source:** Official Turkmen Government Website/State News Agency (TDH)/11/10/07

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=071110b>

**Synopsis:** President Berdymukhamedov received Deputy Director of the Asia and the Pacific Division in the Department of Political Affairs of the UN Secretariat Vladimir Goryaev.

[Passage omitting on congratulations for successful trip to Brussels last week to meet with EU officials]

Vladimir Goryaev emphasized that the United Nations highly appreciated the foreign policy strategy of Turkmenistan from the first days, standing steadfast for broad international co-operation. The high-ranking UN official noted that Turkmenistan's position based on its geo-strategic location stood as an important factor for creating the favorable conditions and vast opportunities for successful enhancement of fruitful dialogue established in recent years.

During the meeting the interlocutors noted that opening the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy in Ashgabat, timed to the 12th anniversary of [Turkmenistan's] neutrality, vividly illustrated the parties' willingness to continue the work to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals. In this regard, the interlocutors discussed the organizational issues of the forthcoming ceremony and the international conference. Thanking Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov for this contribution to the development of the constructive Turkmenistan-UN partnership, Goryaev emphasized that by pursuing well-balanced domestic and foreign policies and consistently implementing the practice of neutrality, Turkmenistan played a key role in the region as a positive factor for stability in Central Asia and the world.

### b. President of Turkmenistan Receives UN Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan

**Original title:** *President of Turkmenistan Receives Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Afghanistan . Excerpt by OSI Turkmenistan Project.*

**Source:** Official Turkmen Government Website/State News Agency (TDH)/11/13/07

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/en/?idr=1&id=071113b>

**Excerpt:** President Berdymukhamedov received Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan Tomas Karl Koenigs and Head of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan Talatbek Masadykov.

[Passage omitted on congratulations for the president for his meetings during the UN General Assembly in September.]

Highly appreciating Turkmenistan's policy of transparency and good neighborliness recognized by the international community, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan expressed belief that the Turkmen leader's initiatives would lay a solid foundation for further effective collaboration with the United Nations. In this regard Mr. Tomas Karl Koenigs welcomed Turkmenistan's position that had played a crucial role in maintaining peaceful life in neighboring Afghanistan, whose people were sincerely grateful for the uninterrupted energy supply and liquefied gas from Turkmenistan.

The interlocutors agreed that broad international co-operation was to be an important factor in Afghanistan's sustainable development and the well-being of the Afghani people and peoples in the region as well. The guest said that the United Nations highly appreciated partnership with Turkmenistan, considering that it provides vast opportunities for collaboration to ensure global security, to combat terrorism and drug-trafficking and to protect borders.

[Passage omitted on benefit of collaboration for stabilization.] .

Noting importance of fostering the fruitful dialogue, the interlocutors put emphasis on the maintenance of effective interaction related to the large-scale projects initiated by the President of Turkmenistan, the TransAfghan gas pipeline Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India in particular.

The interlocutors focused on the issues related to the UN Regional Center for Preventive Diplomacy to be opened in Ashgabat and which is called upon to serve as an effective early warning and conflict prevention mechanism in the region.

[Passage omitted on thanks for invitation to attend Center's opening.]

## c. Finnish Film Calls for Corporate Responsibility in Turkmenistan

**Source:** *Helsingin Sanomat*/hs.fi/11/06/07. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Original title:** *Finnish Documentary Calls for Corporate Responsibility in Human Rights in Turkmenistan*

*Translations of Turkmenistan Leader's Book Seen to Shore Up Dictator's Grip on Country*

**Full version:**

<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Finnish+documentary+calls+for+corporate+responsibility+in+human+rights+in+Turkmenistan/1135231588829>

Further information about the film: <http://www.freedomforsale.com>

**Synopsis:** *Shadow of the Holy Book*, a documentary by Finnish film director Arto Halonen, has been chosen from among 3,500 entries to take part in the main competition series at the Amsterdam International Documentary Film Festival, the Finnish online newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* reported. The documentary is slated to premiere in late November, and claims the human rights situation appears to have been made worse by foreign corporations operating in Turkmenistan commissioning the translation of *Ruhnama*, a propaganda book which supported Saparmurat Niyazov, author of the book and past president of Turkmenistan. A US TV documentary channel, ITVS, has funded the 90-minute film, which could reach as many as 10-20 million households. Four European TV channels have also supported the film.

The idea for the documentary came to Halonen from a series of articles published in *Helsingin Sanomat* by Kaius Niemi and Hannes Heikura, detailing the personality cult surrounding Niyazov and *Ruhnama*.

"Ruhnama is a symbol and tool of a distorted power system, whose translation has allowed large corporations to do business with Turkmenistan," Halonen says. The book has been translated into about 40 languages, including English, Spanish, French, Finnish, German, Turkish, and Russian. Halonen and another scriptwriter, US citizen Kevin Frazier, who lives in Finland, attempted to interview representatives of multinational corporations which took part in the translation to confront them with their moral responsibility, *Helsingin Sanomat* reports.

The project was set back with Niyazov's death in December 2006, but soon the film-makers realized they had a larger story: "perhaps the country will become democratized, perhaps the dissidents that we interviewed can return home from exile," Halonen was quoted as saying. "However, now it seems that no significant social changes have taken place," he said.

Shell reportedly long held negotiations on a project for a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, but pulled out of the project, *Helsingin Sanomat* reports. The former head of Turkmenistan's state bank, who was interviewed for the film, was quoted as saying that the likely reason was that the allegedly requested bribe -- 500 million US dollars -- was "apparently too large."

## 2. DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

### a. Turkmenistan to Invest US \$4 Billion in Raising Living Standards

**Original title:** *Turkmenistan to Channel US \$4 Billion Dollars into National Programme*

**Source:** *FBIS Monitoring*/11/15/07/TV Altyn Asyr/11/12/07

Turkmenistan will allocate US \$4 billion for the implementation of a national program aimed at raising the living standards of people, President Berdymukhamedov announced. In his remarks made at a government meeting on 12 November, broadcast on the national TV the same day, Berdymukhamedov said that the program would be divided into two phases. "We can divide it into two stages and I instruct Geldimyrat Abylov [chief of the Central Bank] to allocate urgently US \$4 billion for the implementation of the first stage of the program," he said.

"We now have to raise the level of living standards of our citizens up to the European level, which of course, requires a lot of efforts," he said adding that not much time left for the fulfillment of this program. "Let us turn entire Turkmenistan into a construction site," Berdymukhamedov said addressing the meeting. He praised the program and said that many new jobs would be created during its implementation. Under the program, due to start from January 2008, hundreds of schools, kindergartens, hospitals, cultural and sports facilities and houses will be built.

At the meeting, Berdymukhamedov relieved governors of a number of regions for poor management and also for health reasons. The president also decreed to reorganize the Trade and Consumers' Union Ministry into the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Economic Relations and appointed Nokerguly Atagulyyev the minister.

Berdymukhamedov praised the country's GDP saying that during the first ten months of this year it was 20.7 per cent, and said that official and black market rates of the national currency, the manat, should be brought to the same level as soon as possible. The president also ordered the Dayhanbank (Farmers' Bank) to carry out payments to farmers, both in national and hard currencies, in equal proportions. Berdymukhamedov also ordered to set 29 May as an annual official holiday for the staff of the Interior Ministry, and also to allow about 188 Turkmen pilgrims to perform this year's pilgrimage trip to Saudi Arabia between 6 and 26 December at the expense of the state..

## **b. Turkmen President Decrees Rise in Minimum Wage**

**Original title:** Decree of the President of Turkmenistan on the Increase of Wages in Turkmenistan

**Source:** Official Turkmen Government Website/11/12/07. Translated by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Full version:** <http://www.turkmenistan.gov.tm/?idr=1&id=071112d>

### **Decree of the President of Turkmenistan on the Increase of Wages in Turkmenistan**

Taking into account the firm material foundation created during the years of independence, the dynamic development of the competitive economy, and with the aim of consistently implementing the tasks of increasing the population's standard of living noted in the National Program, Strategy for Economic, Political, and Cultural Development of Turkmenistan for the Period until 2002, it is decreed:

1. Starting January 1, 2008, to raise the amount of salaries and wages of workers in budget [state] institutions (except for those workers whose salary was raised in accordance with the Decree of the President of Turkmenistan of March 30, 2007 No. 4722, "On the Increase of Wages for Education Workers and Student Stipends"), in self-financed enterprises and in public associations by 10 percent.

2. It is decreed that:

The increase in wages must be ensured through improving the structure of enterprises, organizations, and institutions, to increase the efficiency of the use of productive capacities, the productivity of the labor of workers, and the addition of unused internal reserves;

Starting January 1, 2008, the average wage of workers of enterprises, organizations and institutions of all types of property must not be lower than 2,475,000 manats.

3. Starting January 1, 2008, confirm the amounts of salaries of heads of agencies of the government and management of banks, military, and law-enforcement agencies, judges, prosecutors, editors or newspaper and journals, and public associations, according to attachments 1-5.

4. Assign the oversight for the implementation of this Decree to the deputies of the Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, the khakims [heads] of velyats [provinces] and the city of Ashgabat.

[Signed] President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov



### c. UNICEF to Help Turkmenistan Vaccinate 3 Million Against Measles and Rubella

**Original title:** *A Campaign on Measles and Rubella Vaccination Targeting Three Million Children and Women Launched in Turkmenistan.*

**Source:** UNICEF/11/12/07

**Full version:** <http://www.unicef.org/turkmenistan>

The Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan has started a national vaccination campaign that will prevent children and women of Turkmenistan from [infection with] measles and rubella, the United Nation's Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported. The measles and rubella vaccination campaign is supported by UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and the USAID funded Zdrav Plus project.

The two-week vaccination campaign against measles and rubella is launched for the first time in Turkmenistan, and will cover the entire population of 7-23 years old and women of 24-40 years old, representing about 3 million people or half the population of the country. The vaccination is the only cost-effective way of preventing congenital rubella infection, which often causes blindness, deafness and mental retardation. The vaccination against rubella is even more effective when used with measles vaccines.

The official launch of the campaign took place at the Children's Palace in Ashgabat. "This landmark vaccination campaign will allow children, youth and women of fertile age to protect from the vaccine preventable diseases, such as rubella and measles. "We are pleased and grateful to the international organizations and national partners for uniting in this great initiative," said Maral Aksakova, Head of the Epidemiological Department of the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan.

The vaccination of population will be carried out by 3,000 teams in all health clinics and additional centers in schools and workplaces. Those who are unable to get vaccination during the two week-campaign period will be offered to get immunized later.

### d. Turkmen President's Education Reforms Not Implemented: Human Rights Group

**Original title:** *What is New in Schools?*

**Source:** *Turkmen Initiative for Human Rights/11/12/07*

**Full version:** <http://www.chrono-tm.org/?025504354100000000000011000000>

Education reform in Turkmenistan's secondary schools is facing constraints in the course of its implementation. The first two months of the new academic year have proved that the government officials are incompetent and unprepared to put the education reforms into practice. According to educators, none of the 33 curricula developed by the Ministry of Education of Turkmenistan for the new 2007/2008 academic year are suitable for school practice. «Those are outdated curricula», say teachers of schools and gymnasiums.

The content of the majority of new textbooks was developed before education reform was announced by Berdymukhamedov. Consequently, during the spring and summer, only portraits of the former President were replaced by the portraits of the incumbent. There was no time to seriously review the rest. A textbook for 1st graders was published with annoying spelling mistakes. Furthermore, the textbooks were difficult and impractical. Three textbooks have been combined in one bulky manual. It comprises an ABC book, a spelling book and a reading book. The textbook appears to be very heavy. Yet, a heavy textbook is not the best present for 1st graders.

Thirty six working groups, comprised of scholars, educators, and teacher trainers have been engaged in drafting new school curricula and textbooks. Yet, they lack time to make the switch and develop improved and updated syllabuses and textbooks. As a result, no textbooks for 10th grade schoolchildren are available. Moreover, the 10th graders are now reviewing what they learned during the last academic year of 2006, when they studied in the 9th grade.

«It is easy to study this year», says Agamurat D., a 10th-grader at one of Turkmenabat schools. «During classes we are reviewing what we learned last year. It is easy, but boring. They had better increase the number of hours allotted for IT classes». In a nutshell, neither school curricula, nor new textbooks are

available which meet modern requirements and the criteria stipulated in President Berdymukhamedov's pledges.

His order, which envisaged a 40% salary increase for teachers effective September 1, has not been fulfilled. The school teachers in Ashgabat had an average increase of 15%. For instance, a teacher of chemistry, who had previously received 3,100,00 manats, were paid 3,700,000 manats as September salary. In the regions, the majority of school teachers were not given any increase at all while the September salaries were only paid only in the second half of October.

### 3. ECONOMIC NEWS

#### a. Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Conference Re-convenes After Six Years

**Original title:** 12<sup>th</sup> Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Conference

**Source:** Ministry of Oil and Gas Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Exhibit website/11/13/07. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Full version:** <http://www.tiogc.com/home.html>

**Synopsis:** After a six-year hiatus, the 12th Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Conference is to take place at the Ashgabat Exhibition and Conference Palace on November 14-15, parallel to the annual national oil and gas exhibition. The conference is officially supported by Turkmenistan's Ministry of Oil and Gas. Fifty prominent speakers are expected to make presentations over two days, and more than 500 industry executives and specialists are expected to participate. The lead sponsor of the event is British Petroleum, and other oil and gas corporate sponsors include Allianz, Baker Hughes, Burren Oil, Buried Hill, Caddo Exploration, Cameron, Calik Enerji, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, DragonOil, ENEX Process Engineering, LeBoeuf Lamb, J. Ray MacDermott, Mayer-Brown, Mitro, National Oilwell Varco, OMV, Lukoil, Schlumberger, Shell, StatoilHydro, and WesternGeco.

#### b. Turkmenistan to Reform Foreign Currency Exchange

**Original title:** Turkmenistan Presses on With Forex Market Reform.

**Source:** Reuters/Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan/11/14/07. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Synopsis:** President Berdymukhamedov gave officials 10 days on November 13 to produce a plan for eliminating a huge gap between the official and the black market foreign exchange rates, Reuters reported, citing *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, the state newspaper.

Turkmenistan has promised to free up the foreign exchange market, but had not said when. The official rate of exchange is 5,200 manat per US dollar, but on the black market, the dollar is worth about 23,600 manat.

«The president ... ordered the heads of the Central Bank and the Ministry of Economy and Finance to address the issue within 10 days,» said *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*. Although officials did not mention any new rates, the news immediately caused the manat to go up slightly in value to 23,200 per dollar in Ashgabat, Reuters reported.

#### c. Turkmen Oil Manoeuvres Evoke Great Game

**Source:** Financial Times/11/13/07. Synopsis by OSI Turkmenistan Project.

**Full version:** [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a1d5f302-918c-11dc-9590-0000779fd2ac.html?ncklick\\_check=1](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a1d5f302-918c-11dc-9590-0000779fd2ac.html?ncklick_check=1)

**Synopsis:** Hundreds of business people and government officials are flocking to Ashgabat this week to attend an international oil and gas conference to explore opportunities to develop his country's Caspian Sea oilfields, the Financial Times (FT) reported. The new Turkmen leader has approved a plan to increase gas supplies to Russia through a new northern pipeline and authorized construction of a pipeline east to China to "break Russia's stranglehold on gas export routes out of central Asia," says FT. Berdymukhamedov has also reached out to Western governments to discuss their plans for a pipeline across the Caspian Sea to deliver

Central Asian gas to Europe. "We have declared ourselves open to the outside world and we have taken some steps to show it," a Turkmen diplomat was quoted as saying about the new overtures.

Western oilmen interviewed by FT say Turkmenistan is "playing crafty politics, using pipelines as bargaining chips to maximise interest in its resources." Although Russia will remain Turkmenistan's prime customer and dominate gas routes, by invoking the prospect of alternative pipelines, Turkmenistan can strengthen its hand in price negotiations. Russia has complied with Turkmenistan's demand for a 40-percent price hike in 2008, a move expected to finalize a stalled agreement to build a pipeline to Russia by 2012. Meanwhile, China is both financing and building a pipeline from Turkmenistan to Shanghai set for completion in 2009.

US and European diplomats are pressing Turkmenistan to support construction of the Trans-Caspian pipeline to reduce energy dependence on Russia. Samuel Bodman, the US Secretary of Energy, and Andris Piebalgs, EU Energy Commissioner, are attending the conference in Ashgabat.

Turkmenistan's future customers are concerned they may not have enough gas to meet all the demand. "If Berdymukhamedov was in a hurry to get the trans-Caspian project going, he would order an independent audit of Turkmenistan's gas reserves," Jonathan Stern, head of gas research at the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, stated, according to the FT. The lack of transparency could be a deliberate strategy. "Not knowing what all the cards are in the deck may give Berdymukhamedov the best bargaining position with Russia, China and the west," Martha Olcott, a Central Asia expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was quoted as saying.

#### **d. European Energy Commissioner in Turkmenistan for Talks**

*Source: FBIS/Official Website of Government of Turkmenistan/11/12/07*

A delegation of the European Union led by European Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs is paying a visit to [the Turkmen capital of] Ashgabat. The visitors will participate in the exhibition and International Turkmen Oil and Gas 2007 conference being held in the Turkmen capital on these days. During their visit to Ashgabat, the members of the delegation will hold talks at the Ministry of Energy and Industry, the Ministry of Economics and Finance, and the Ministry of Oil and Gas and Mineral Resources of Turkmenistan.

President Berdymukhamedov is also expected to receive European Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs.

#### **e. EBRD Director of Natural Resources Visits Ashgabat**

*Original title: High-Ranking EBRD Official Visits Ashgabat*

*Source: Official Website of Government of Turkmenistan/11/13/07*

Kevin Bortz, Director of Natural Resources of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), is visiting Ashgabat, the official website of the Government of Turkmenistan reported.

The guest will take part in the Turkmenistan International Oil and Gas Conference 2007 and will hold a series of meetings and talks with the Government of Turkmenistan, the high-ranking officials of the national ministries and departments including the Ministry of Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources, the State Agency for Hydrocarbon Resources Management and Use under the President of Turkmenistan, the Turkmengaz State Concern, the Turkmenneft State Concern and the Turkmeneftegazstroy State Concern.

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*Unless otherwise indicated, all translations have been prepared by OSI's Turkmenistan Project.*

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